

REMARKS

Claims 1-28 are cancelled; claims 29 and 31 are amended; and claims 29-35 are pending in the application.

Claim 31 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicant thanks the Examiner for the careful reading of the claim, and has amended the claim to address the Examiner's §112 rejection. Applicant believes that the amendment overcomes the §112 rejection, and accordingly requests that the §112 rejection be withdrawn in the Examiner's next action.

Claims 29-35 stand rejected over Applicant's submitted prior art, Inoue (U.S. Patent 6,443,816), Franca (U.S. Patent 6,217,422); and Lorimer (U.S. Patent 6,589,878) in various combinations.

Applicant has amended independent claim 29, from which the remaining claims 30-35 depend, and believes that such amendment places claims 29-35 into condition for allowance.

Applicant's amendment to claim 29 adds a recitation that the recited apparatus is configured so that the steam has a temperature of from about 200°F to about 300°F as the steam exits the recited steam outlet port, and accordingly so that all material exiting the steam outlet port is in vapor phase when the apparatus is utilized for conditioning a surface of a polishing pad. The amendment to claim 29 is supported at, for example, paragraph 0024 of the originally-filed application, and therefore does not comprise "new matter".

The Examiner cites Inoue for disclosing an apparatus configured to jet steam during conditioning of a pad. Applicant notes, however, that the apparatus of Inoue is specifically

configured to jet a two-phase mixture, and specifically to jet a combination of liquid and vapor (see, for example, the Abstract of Inoue). Inoue does not disclose or suggest any system configured to jet only a single vapor phase through outlet nozzles during conditioning of a pad surface. The Examiner's other cited references also do not suggest or disclose any apparatus configured to jet only vapor phase material through an outlet port during conditioning of a surface of a polishing pad.

The cited references do not suggest or disclose all of the recited features of claim 29, whether utilized alone or in any combination, since all of the cited references lack showing or suggestion of the claim 29 recited feature of an apparatus configured to have all of the material exiting an outlet port being in vapor phase when the apparatus is utilized for conditioning a surface of a polishing pad. Amended claim 29 is therefore believed allowable over the Examiner's cited references, and Applicant requests such allowance in the Examiner's next action.

Claims 30-35 depend from claim 29 and are therefore allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding claim 29.

Claims 29-35 are allowable for the reasons discussed above, and Applicant therefore requests formal allowance of such claims in the Examiner's next action.

Respectfully submitted,

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